

Lawfully Admitted Aliens—When You Need A Social Security Number And When You Don't

When A Lawfully Admitted Alien Needs A Social Security Number

If you are a lawfully admitted alien with Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) permission to work in the U.S., you need a Social Security number. Also, if you are a lawfully admitted alien who does not have permission to work, federal law requires you to have a Social Security number to enlist in the U.S. military service. The Social Security number is used as your military service number.

You May Be Required To Have A Social Security Number For Other Reasons

State and local laws that conform with federal law may require you to give a Social Security number—even if you don't have permission to work. The Social Security Act permits state and local governments to use the Social Security number to administer laws related to—

- taxes,
- general public assistance,
- driver licensing or
- motor vehicle registration.

How Do You Get A Social Security Number?

If you have permission to work, bring your INS documents to a Social Security office when you apply for your Social Security number. If you don't have permission to work, but still need a Social Security number, you must—

- call or visit a Social Security office to apply for a number;
- provide original documents showing your age, identity and lawful alien status; and

- provide a letter from the government agency requiring you to get a Social Security number on letterhead stationary (no form letters or photocopies). The letter specifically must identify you as the applicant, cite the law requiring you to have a Social Security number and indicate that you meet all the agency's requirements, except having the Social Security number.

If you are assigned a Social Security number for nonwork purposes, you can't use it to work. If you use it to work, the Social Security Administration may inform INS.

Are You A Dependent?

As a dependent, you don't need a Social Security number when you do not have permission to work. Apply to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). Contact IRS in person or by calling the toll-free IRS number **1-800-TAXFORM** (1-800-829-3676) and request form W-7, *Application for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number*.

A dependent can be the child, stepchild, adopted or foster child, parent or in-law, grandparent, brother or sister of the taxpayer. A spouse is never considered a dependent for tax purposes.

A nonworking alien or a spouse with income such as interest, investments or rental property must apply for an ITIN when a tax return is filed. You can't get a Social Security number.

What Can You Get Without A Social Security Number

As a lawfully admitted alien, you can obtain many benefits and services without having a Social Security number, even though you are

asked to give one. You don't need a Social Security number to—

- **purchase savings bonds.** A lawfully admitted alien may be designated a co-owner or beneficiary without a Social Security number.
- **conduct business with a bank or financial institution.** Ask for IRS form W-8, *Certificate of Foreign Status*. The following lawfully admitted aliens and immediate family members don't need Social Security numbers for banking or monetary transactions:
 - ambassadors, ministers, career diplomatic or consular officers;
 - naval, military or other attaches of foreign embassies and legations;
 - accredited representatives of organizations that qualify under the International Organization Immunities Act; and
 - students attending recognized post-secondary schools or any training programs conducted by a federal agency.

If your lawfully admitted alien classification isn't listed, you can get an ITIN if you have lived in the U.S. more than 180 days.

A family member doesn't need a Social Security number to—

- **register for school.** Schools aren't authorized to use the Social Security number to administer education programs and will assign internal numbers. A student applying for the SAT, GRE and other educational tests doesn't need a Social Security number to take the test.
- **report group health insurance coverage.** Employers aren't required to report Social Security numbers for lawfully admitted alien family members who are covered by group health plans but don't have Social Security numbers.
- **apply for school lunch programs.** The parent applying for free or reduced-price

lunch for the child(ren) can use his/her own number or should get a letter from Social Security stating no Social Security number will be assigned.

- **apply for HUD housing.** Family members age 6 and older must give a Social Security number or get a letter from the Social Security Administration stating no Social Security number will be assigned.

Lawfully admitted alien visitors aren't eligible for student loans, food stamps, AFDC, Medicaid and commercial driver's licenses. Also, federal law does not permit states to use the Social Security number to issue non-driver identification cards.

For More Information

You can get more information 24 hours a day by calling Social Security's toll-free number, **1-800-772-1213**. You can call for an appointment or to speak to a service representative between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on business days. Our lines are busiest early in the week and early in the month so, if your business can wait, it's best to call at other times.

People who are deaf or hard of hearing may call our toll-free "TTY" number, 1-800-325-0778, between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on business days.

Social Security information is now available on the Internet at <http://www.ssa.gov>.

The Social Security Administration treats all calls confidentially—whether they're made to our toll-free numbers or to one of our local offices. We also want to make sure that you receive accurate and courteous service. That's why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some incoming and outgoing telephone calls.



Social Security Administration
SSA Publication No. 05-10096
April 1997 (*Recycle prior editions*)
ICN 468630
Unit of Issue—HD (one hundred)



Printed on recycled paper